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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Note verbale dated 13 June 2005 from the Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and has the honour to enclose the final press statement issued at the ninety-fifth regular session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was held in Riyadh on 11 June 2005 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain would appreciate it if the present note were issued as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 36, 37, 62 and 148, and of the Security Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 13 June 2005 from the Permanent Mission of Bahrain addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Press statement issued at the ninety-fifth regular session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, held in Riyadh on 11 June 2005

The Ministerial Council held its ninety-fifth regular session on Saturday, 11 June 2005 in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the chairmanship of His Excellency Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain and Chairman of the current session of the Ministerial Council. His Excellency Abdul Rahman bin Hamad al-Attiyah, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), also participated.

The Ministerial Council offered its most sincere good wishes to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, and expressed the hope that God would keep and bless him with a cure, beseeching God Almighty to preserve the health and strength of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, grant him protection, extend him good fortune and bless the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in his auspicious era with further growth and prosperity and his continued contribution to the auspicious advance of the GCC and his brothers, the leaders of the GCC States.

The Ministerial Council also offered its most sincere good wishes to His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, for the success of the surgery which he had undergone, and beseeched God Almighty to grant him health and strength and protect him in order to further the growth and prosperity of the fraternal people of Kuwait and the prosperity of the GCC and his brothers, the leaders of the GCC States.

The Ministerial Council also offered congratulations and blessings to His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, on the occasion of the implementation of the permanent Constitution of the country, and expressed the hope that the fraternal State of Qatar and its Amir, Government and people would continue to progress and prosper.

The Ministerial Council recalled the achievements of the seventh consultative meeting of the leaders of the GCC States held in Riyadh on Saturday, 28 May 2005, and the support that the leaders had given to strengthening and supporting joint cooperation and, also, developments in regional and international political and security issues, first among which was the question of Palestine and the road to peace in the Middle East in addition to counter-terrorism, the progress of development, regional challenges and intra-Arab relations. The Ministerial Council emphasized the link between the capacity of the GCC to confront these challenges and its internal unity.

In the domain of economic cooperation, the Ministerial Council examined the achievements of the Committee on Financial and Economic Cooperation at its sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth meetings and its recommendations and resolutions to strengthen joint economic activity, including the customs union, completion of the

Gulf Common Market, monetary union and negotiations with States and economic groups. New proposals and ideas were put forward on these topics, which the Ministerial Council decided to transmit to the Committee on Financial and Economic Cooperation for consideration.

Subject to authorization from the Supreme Council, the Ministerial Council also decided to permit nationals of GCC States to engage in the following activities: national employment agencies, car rentals and most cultural activities, starting from 1 September 2005.

With regard to the relations between the GCC and other States and international groups, the Ministerial Council referred to the outcomes of the joint GCC-European Union ministerial meeting that was held in the Kingdom of Bahrain on 5 April 2005. The Ministerial Council was informed of a new round of negotiations held with the European Union from 7 to 9 June 2005, agreement upon a new round of negotiations to be held with China on 20 and 21 June 2005, and the signature of two framework agreements on economic cooperation, one between the GCC States and MERCOSUR, the other between the GCC States and the Republic of Turkey, in preparation for entry into negotiations on the establishment of free-trade zones with MERCOSUR and Turkey.

In the area of human and environmental affairs, the Ministerial Council was informed of the steps taken in order to implement the decision of the Supreme Council at its twenty-fifth session with regard to agreement to extend insurance coverage through civilian retirement and social security to nationals of GCC States working outside their countries in any other member State, in accordance with the system accompanying the decision, and commended the efforts of member States in this regard.

The Ministerial Council was informed of the efforts of the Council of Ministers of Higher Education and Ministers of General Education to implement the decision of the Supreme Council at its twenty-fifth session, and was also apprised of the formation by the Secretariat General of a task force to evaluate implementation of Supreme Council decisions relating to education.

The Ministerial Council was also informed of the follow-up reports on the activities of the joint cooperation committees in the area of human and environmental affairs, and expressed satisfaction with their achievements.

With regard to military matters, the Ministerial Council was informed of progress in military cooperation during the preceding period and, in particular, concerning progress on joint military projects related to reliable communications, the cooperation package and the other spheres of military cooperation.

The Ministerial Council expressed satisfaction with the procedures and studies that had been carried out and emphasized the importance of completing the outstanding matters in the field of military cooperation in the light of the relevant decisions issued.

In the sphere of security coordination and cooperation, the Ministerial Council reviewed progress in security coordination and cooperation between member States in the context of recent regional and international security developments, and expressed satisfaction with the procedures instituted for the implementation of decisions in this sphere, in particular that related to the issuance of the smart card,

one of the multiple uses of which would be to contribute to the facilitation of travel by nationals between member States.

In the domain of counter-terrorism, the Ministerial Council reiterated the call of the GCC States for a concerted global effort to combat terrorism, which had assumed numerous dimensions, forms and aspects threatening to international peace and security, and emphasized the importance of confronting this universal problem at the regional and international levels.

In this context, the Council expressed its appreciation of the initiative taken by Saudi Arabia in calling for the International Counter-Terrorism Conference, held in Riyadh from 5 to 8 February 2005. The Council emphasized that it welcomed and supported the Riyadh Declaration and the recommendations arising from it, foremost among which was the proposal of His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz for the establishment of an international counter-terrorism centre, which would doubtless make a vital and active contribution in support of international counter-terrorism efforts.

The Ministerial Council studied a number of significant political issues raised in the regional and international arenas, and clarified its well-established positions on these issues, as follows:

With regard to the issue of the continuing occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the three islands, namely, the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, which belong to the United Arab Emirates, the Council reaffirmed the following positions:

- To support the rightful sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over its three islands, the territorial waters, airspace and continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone of these three islands, being an integral part of the United Arab Emirates;
- To reiterate regret at the failure of contacts with the Islamic Republic of Iran to produce any positive results to date in resolving the issue of the three islands, which would contribute to strengthening security and stability in the region;
- To study all peaceful means whereby the right of the United Arab Emirates over its three islands could be restored;
- To invite the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to the efforts of the United Arab Emirates and the international community to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or resort to the International Court of Justice.

The Council reviewed the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation and the increasing cycle of violence in Iraq, the ensuing suffering caused to the fraternal people of Iraq and obstruction of the political process, which aims to secure a positive foundation for the new Iraq. In this context, the Ministerial Council reaffirmed its well-established positions as follows:

- To condemn all terrorist practices and acts that target Iraqi civilians and military, humanitarian and religious institutions, in addition to the abduction and torture of innocent persons;
- To support and endorse all efforts that lead to national reconciliation and the participation of the entire spectrum of the Iraqi people in the political process, in order to preserve the unity, independence and sovereignty of Iraq;

- To emphasize non-interference in the internal affairs of Iraq and appeal to other parties to commit to the same approach;
- To seek to restore the vitality of Iraq and return it as an active member of the Gulf, Arab and international spheres, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), living in peace and security with its neighbours;
- To reiterate its condemnation of the flagrant and gross violation of human rights, Islamic principles and Arab morals and values represented in the deliberate mass killing of Iraqis and prisoners of war, including Kuwaiti nationals and nationals of other States, perpetrated by the former Iraqi regime and brought to light with the recent discovery of mass graves;
- To urge the United Nations to expend the necessary efforts in collaboration with the Iraqi Government to find a final solution for the return of Kuwaiti property, Kuwaiti national archives and other documents seized by the former Iraqi regime during its occupation of Kuwait.

The Council examined developments in the Iraqi situation, the continuing violence and the targeting and killing of innocent Iraqis striving to achieve security and stability, and emphasized the necessity for all Iraqis to cooperate and stand united in order to confront all those who were undermining Iraq and its people and so enable the country to regain an effective position within the international community.

The Council expressed the hope that the International Conference on Iraq scheduled to be held in Brussels on 22 June 2005 would result in support for the Iraqi Government and those promoting the stability, independence and territorial unity of Iraq.

The Ministerial Council examined developments in the Palestinian situation and recent developments in the Middle East peace process and emphasized the following points:

- Request to the Israeli Government to desist from its hostile practices against the Palestinian people, expansion of settlement construction, continued construction of the wall in Jerusalem and Ramallah, pursuit of policies of postponement and procrastination with regard to the implementation of the conventions and treaties to which it had acceded and which had been agreed with the parties concerned, defiance of protocols, conventions and resolutions with international legitimacy and ignoring the road map and the positive aspects of the Arab initiative;
- A just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East would not be achieved unless the principle of land for peace was applied and a lasting independent Palestinian State established with Jerusalem as its capital, existing alongside the State of Israel in peace and security, in addition to Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and withdrawal from Shab'a farms in southern Lebanon;
- Commendation of the efforts of His Excellency the President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas, which aimed to provide security and stability to the fraternal Palestinian people and resume negotiations leading to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. In this context, the Ministerial Council expressed its satisfaction with the result of the meeting

between His Excellency President George Bush and His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas;

- Appeal to the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the States of the European Union, the United Nations and the international community in general to continue their efforts to activate the road map and the Arab initiative in order to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East;

- Call again on the international community to take action to turn the Middle East into a region free of all weapons of mass destruction, including the Gulf region, and to bring Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and subject all of its nuclear facilities to the international inspections regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to be regarded as a basis for any future security arrangements;

- Expression of the desire of the GCC States to support the political and economic security and stability of the fraternal Lebanese people, condemn the repeated Israeli threats to and hostile acts against the sovereignty and independence of Lebanon and call on the fraternal Lebanese people to stand united and close ranks.

The Ministerial Council examined the discussion concerning expansion of membership of the Security Council and emphasized the importance of allowing further time for coordination and consultation in this regard.

Issued in Riyadh on Saturday, 11 June 2005